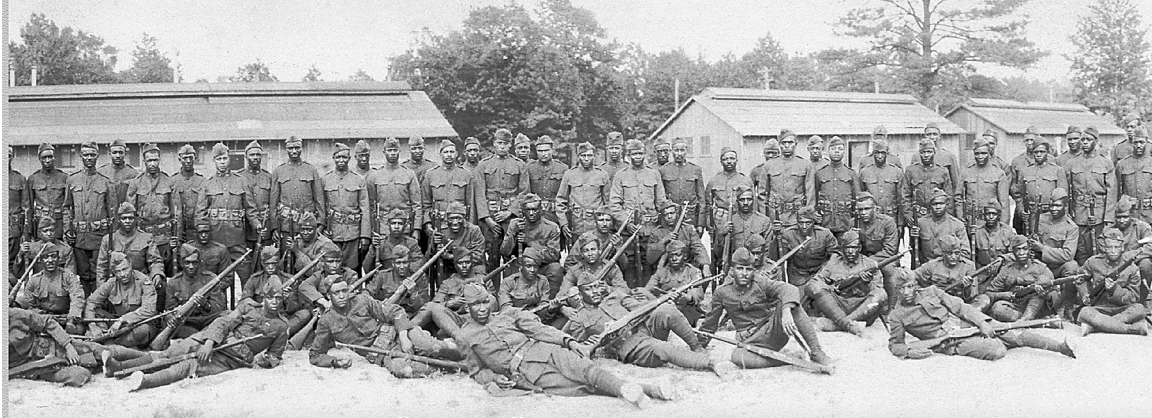
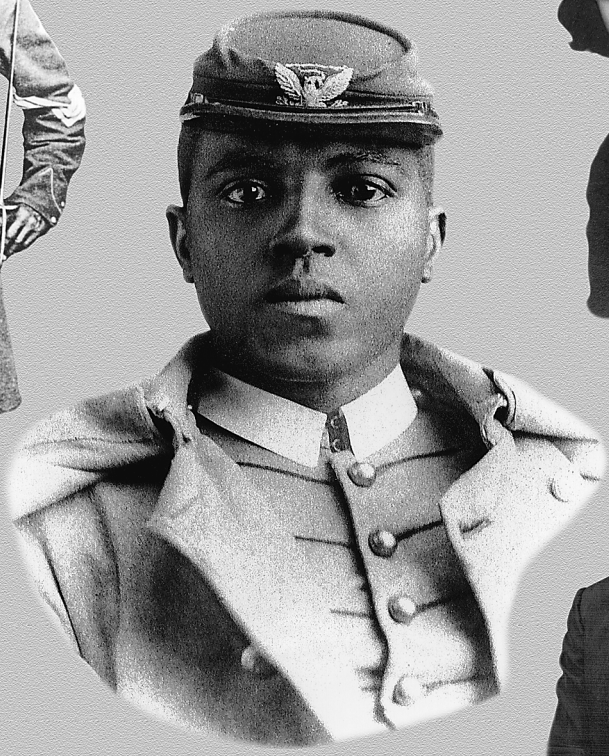


Joining the Ranks



African Americans in the Military

September 13, 2003 – February 28, 2004

Acknowledgements

The names of people who contributed to this exhibit would take several pages to list. So, to each and every person, organization, and institution that gave or loaned something, whether it was a picture, an artifact, money, a story, a contact, or your time, I thank you. This exhibit would not have been possible without your help. I would specifically like to thank the Kentucky Historical Society Foundation for the financial support and the dedicated and talented Kentucky Historical Society staff for all the many hours they provided to make this exhibition a success.

Michael R. Jones, Curator
Kentucky Historical Society
September 2003

Introduction

The stories in this exhibit are for the most part told from a Kentucky point of view. African American service in the military is a part of American history. In it you will find stories of perseverance, tragedy, and triumph. Take your time as you walk through the exhibit and think about what these individuals experienced and what American military personnel around the world are experiencing today.

Duty, Courage, and Indomitable Spirit:

African Americans in the Military

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A long forgotten aspect of American Civil War history was brought to the public's imagination with the 1989 release of the film *Glory*. The film draws on historical accuracy, displays powerful emotions, and makes good use of modern techniques of cinematic storytelling. *Glory* focuses on the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Infantry Regiment and their charge against Fort Wagner, South Carolina. In addition to providing a keen observation of the first African American regiment organized in the North to fight during the Civil War, the film displays brilliantly how the issues of freedom and military service are intertwined for African Americans. For these men discriminatory practices that permeated the U.S. military were as constant as any foe they faced on the battlefield. Despite this reality, African Americans have long responded to, and even initiated in some instances, every call to duty issued for protection of the country's ideals of liberty.

While the film *Glory* was a wonderful tool for public education about African American troops during the Civil War, much work is still needed to uncover fully the larger picture of the role African Americans have undertaken in the defense of this nation and the commonwealth. One recent step in this direction is an exciting exhibit curated by Michael Jones and his colleagues at the Kentucky History Center titled, *Joining the Ranks – African Americans in the Military*. This exhibit is sweeping in scope and covers the period from early settlement in Kentucky and the American Revolution through the Desert Storm campaign in the 1990s. The selections included in the exhibit capably illustrate the rich tradition of patriotic service by African Americans. Of singular importance here is the manner in which he provides local, state, and regional context for a national story. Individual heroes emerge in this exhibit, illustrating that "we were always there." From the pioneer fighter, Monk Estill, to the epic story of naval veteran and master diver, Carl Brashear, Kentucky African Americans answer the call to serve their country with duty, courage, and spirit. Recognition of their patriotism and valor is not always made at the time African American men and women "join the ranks" and serve their country, but in the larger scheme of things, the recognition eventually unfolds as evidenced by the Carl Brashear story, highlighted in recent years in yet another epic film, *Men of Honor*.

When Jordan C. Jackson (1848-1919), a prominent African American resident, politician, businessman, and civic leader in Lexington, addressed a convention of over 400 people assembled in that city's St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church during June 1892, his speech affirmed awareness of the patriotic contributions of his father and forefathers. Jackson informed the audience, "Our fathers have labored to make this country what it is today." He reminded the audience further, "Our fathers shed their blood, from the wars of the revolution to the rebellion, for its independence and preservation. . . ."[1]

Jackson, a slave until emancipated by his own father's enlistment in the Fifth Cavalry of the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War, was obviously aware that Kentucky African Americans have been fighting for this country and making the ultimate sacrifice of giving their lives in support of patriotism since they were brought here by the first settlers. Moreover, he lived during the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, and through the First World War. He helped to raise a contingent of men from Lexington for service during the latter two wars. Jackson was relentless in providing support to African American Civil War Veterans facing grueling challenges, not only from war-time service, but also in their efforts to secure pensions to cover their infirmities sustained in the war. Although he was not a veteran, Jackson was in frequent attendance at meetings and activities sponsored by Lexington's Charles Sumner Post of the Grand Army of the Republic.

Through Jackson and others, stories of African American patriots in Kentucky have long been preserved and transmitted within African American communities via oral traditions, in the absence of attention from historians in texts and narratives about the commonwealth. Yet, even official records show these men fought alongside their slaveowners to protect and defend early stations and forts. Practically all of the pioneers who helped to resist sieges at Boonesborough and other sites were considered as fighting in the American Revolution. African Americans were excluded from service when the Continental Army was first formed in 1775. This regulation was soon overridden by the desperate need for manpower. By the war's end, more than 5,000 (both slaves and freemen) served in the Continental Army or Navy. Most, however, accompanied their owners as unofficial members of militias with neither pay nor official recognition offered as incentives. Nevertheless, at least two African American men in Kentucky did apply for and receive pensions for their service in the Revolution. Daniel Goff and Julius Cesar both settled in Georgetown after the war. Goff served with Colonel Cropper's Fifteenth Virginia Regiment, and Cesar's service was with Colonel Lasher's New York Volunteers Twenty-second Continental Regiment.[2]

In subsequent service African Americans were assigned menial roles. A myth was perpetuated during the late eighteenth century that was used as justification for limiting their combat experience and denying their privilege of mustering into official service. According to the myth, African American men could not and would not fight. Thus, they were impressed, forced to serve as personal servants and bodyguards, cooks, and musicians, during the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and initially in the Civil War. Frequently, however, they were placed in the line of fire. When they were afforded opportunitiesin the heat of battle they displayed their courage and willingness to engage in combat and to protect and defend themselves, as well as their families and those of their owners. As the following two stories illustrate, their deeds simply have not been recorded in equal measure to their contributions to defend the commonwealth and the nation in every patriotic measure undertaken, including those occurring before statehood.

One story about an early patriot defending Kentucky appears in the Tuesday, April 7, 1891, edition of the *Kentucky Leader* in an article titled, "A Colored Indian Fighter."[3] In this article, the reporter announces that a monument was being erected in the white cemetery at Richmond to honor Monk Estill, an enslaved African American proclaimed for his heroics in a battle with the Wyandottes, in 1782. This was the battle during which Captain James Estill and about half of his twenty-five men were killed or seriously wounded. For his

gallantry, Monk Estill was emancipated shortly thereafter by the oldest son of James Estill. The prototype of an "ideal" pioneer settler, Monk was a man of many talents, and the assistance he provided to residents of the struggling Fort Boonesborough proved him almost indispensable for the survival of the early settlers. By all accounts he was a blacksmith, superior marksman and hunter, and he taught Daniel Boone and other pioneers how to manufacture gunpowder using charcoal, sulphur, and saltpeter that he found in nearby caverns. Thus, Monk emerges not only as a hero, but he provided the settlers with a vital means of self-protection. Also, he became the first African American in Kentucky emancipated, and was the father of the first free African American child born here as well.

With the passage of time, however, the monument honoring Monk Estill either did not come to fruition or it disappeared from the Richmond Cemetery and is not available currently for viewing. Curiously, the name "m. Estill" still appears on the cemetery's roster among deceased persons listed in the Estill family plot. That the monument to Monk was to appear nearly 110 years after his death speaks loudly, and proudly, for the Madison County citizens who saw fit to memorialize this unheralded figure in Kentucky's military history. If Monk Estill were the only African American to make such a contribution, we might be tempted to think of his valor as an anomaly. However, such was not the case.

A walk through Kentucky's history, coupled with a lot of digging in archival repositories, bears more fruit illustrating patriotic service among Kentucky African Americans from the very onset of settlement. The following story from the son of one of Boonesborough's first settlers places Captain Jack Hart, bodyguard and slave of Nathaniel Hart, at Sycamore Shoals in present-day Tennessee, scene of the treaty resulting in the purchase of "Kaintucke" from the Cherokees; as a member of Daniel Boone's party marking the Wilderness Road; and at the construction of Fort Boonesborough. Further, the story illustrates that during his lifetime, efforts were made to acknowledge Captain Jack's patriotism rendered during the early days of settlement. Jack Hart may have been the first African American to reach the lands lying on the south side of the Kentucky River when it was presumed purchased from the Cherokees. For certain, he remained a permanent attachment to the Hart family and is one of the best-documented early African Americans in the commonwealth. Nathaniel Hart Jr. included the following excerpt about Jack in a letter he wrote during November 1845, to Lyman Draper, who documented early pioneer life in Kentucky:

> I have still living an aged Negro man of clear intellect and memory, who was present at Watauga in March 1775, (when The Treaty of Purchase of Kentucky was negotiated by Henderson and Co.), [and] who came on from the treaty ground with Boone as the pilot to Henderson's Co. to the Kentucky River, where they built the Fort called Boonesborough, of such early notoriety in the history of the state. He was present this fall at the re-interment of Boone and wife in the Cemetery at Frankfort [September 13, 1845] and has been in Kentucky upwards of 70 years.[4]

Although Captain Jack Hart is not mentioned by name in this excerpt, there is little reason to doubt that the reference is to him, given other threads of information that document both his life and patriotic contributions. He is listed by name in Hart family estate inventories continuously from 1783 to 1799.[5] Further, evidence cannot be found showing that he was ever emancipated. In

fact, he was still considered "property" of the Harts in 1846, when a resolution was entered into the Kentucky House of Representatives to replace his rifle lost at the Battle of Blue Licks in 1782. The Resolution reads as follows:

> WHEREAS, it is represented to this General Assembly, that Jack Hart, a man of color, emigrated to Kentucky in the capacity of a servant to Capt. Nat Hart, in the year 1774, and endured the perils, privations and hardships incident to the pioneers of "the dark and bloody ground;" that for his fidelity and his expertness as a hunter, he was presented by Col. David Hart, with a rifle gun; that upon information being received at Boonesboro' of Bryant's station being besieged by the Indians, he loaned his gun to a man then at the fort, to go to the assistance of the besieged, and the man returned without the gun, having lost it at the battle of the Blue Licks: therefore, in consideration of the valuable and faithful services of said Jack, in the first settlement of Kentucky, and in further consideration of his giving up his gun, so cheerfully, to be used in repelling the savage foe,
>
> *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky*, that a gun be made, under the direction of the Adjutant General of the State, as early as practicable, with the following inscription engraved on the barrel thereof: "Presented by the Legislature of Kentucky to Jack Hart, the Pioneer of the African race to 'the dark and bloody ground,' awarded for faithful service and to compensate him for q rifle lost at the battle of the Blue Licks." Provided, The cost of the same shall not exceed thirty dollars. And so soon as said gun shall be finished, the Adjutant General is hereby required to notify Nathaniel Hart, of Woodford, of the fact, who may receive the same for said Jack and receipt therefor; and upon the presentation of said receipt, together with a statement in writing of the cost of said gun, by the Adjutant General, and by whom made, it shall be the duty of the Second Auditor to draw his warrant on the Treasurer for the amount, in favor of the manufacturer of the gun, to be paid by the Treasurer out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated: *Provided*, The said Jack Hart be, and he is hereby exempt from the penalties of the law against slaves carrying a gun.[6]

A vote to pass this resolution was placed on the floor of the house three times. Jack Hart did not receive appropriate recognition from the Kentucky General Assembly for the role he played in defense of the commonwealth. However, when a death notice appeared in 1927 about his great-granddaughter, Lizzie Shelton, at least two newspapers made claims that he was honored by the legislature in recognition of his services to the commonwealth.[7] This is possibly a case of erroneous transmission through Hart family oral traditions, both the Black and White sides, or it is possible that a member of the Hart family gave him a replacement gun. The legend is that a portrait of Jack, along with his rifle, was one of the most treasured relics in the Hart ancestral home, Spring Hill, in Woodford County. The portrait, painted by Beard, was reportedly loaned for exhibition at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. It was later destroyed when the house burned in 1902. As for the gun, the legend continues that Jack's gun disappeared during the Civil War when General Stephen Burbridge's men raided the Hart plantation. Regardless, the failure of the general assembly to honor him sealed Jack's fate as one of the commonwealth's unsung heroes.

Lying buried in newspapers and public records around the state are similar stories of thousands of other African Americans who remain unrecognized for

their patriotic contributions. It is possible, through diligent research, to lift some of these patriots from obscurity and restore them to their rightful place in the annals of the commonwealth's heroes. We hope this exhibit will inspire such research from viewers in every county across the state. Such acts will provide a much more clear and encompassing picture of the contributions of African Americans for the protection and preservation of this great commonwealth.

[1]"Against Separate Coaches," *Kentucky Leader*, June 22, 1892.

[2]Robert E. Greene, *Black Courage 1775-1783: Documentation of Black Participation in the American Revolution* (Washington: National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, 1984), 48, 59.

[3]"A Colored Indian Fighter," *Kentucky Leader*, April 7, 1891.

[4]Photocopy of a letter from Nathaniel Hart to Lyman Draper, (1845), Draper Manuscripts, Series CC, Vol. 2, in Nathaniel Hart - Biography File, Thomas D. Clark Library, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort.

[5]Lincoln County Will Book A, 25 May 1874, p. 93; Lincoln County Will Book A, 17 May 1786, p. 134; Lincoln County Will Book B, 31 August 1805, p. 287.

[6]*Journal of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Kentucky* (Frankfort: State Printer,1846), 267-69; Edmund Halsey Collection. Filson Historical Society, Louisville. The Kentucky General Assembly passed a law in 1798 prohibiting Negroes, Mulattoes or Indians from keeping any "gun, powder, shot, club or other weapon whatsoever, offensive or defensive" and called for immediate seizure of such weapons if found on a slave. An exception was made for enslaved persons living on plantations if a license was obtained by the owner from a justice of the peace in the county where such plantations lie. The law also provided that every free Negro head of household could carry one gun. See Littell's *Laws of Kentucky*, Vol. 2, 1810, Section 5, Ch. 63, p. 113.

[7]See "Lizzie Shelton," *Lexington Herald-Leader*, 30 May 1927, and African American Clippings Notebook, Woodford County Historical Society, for copy of a *Woodford Sun* clipping about Jack Hart, from the 1927 *Sun* newspaper files.

The author expresses appreciation to Pen Bogert of the Filson Historical Society for assistance in locating Hart family inventory information.

Exhibition checklist and background information

Joining the Ranks: African Americans in the Military

During the Civil War African Americans occupied a legally separate place in the American military. Over the years, black military personnel not only fought the enemies of the country but also prejudice from their own country.

About a year after the end of the Korean War in 1953, most branches of military service had some level of integration. Today African Americans can be found in all branches and at all levels of military service. Their journey into the ranks is as old as the United States itself.

1775-1905

African American Troops Are Here to Stay

African Americans have participated in the American military as far back as the French and Indian War (1756-63). During the Civil War (1861-65) the issue of slavery was decided once and for all, and African Americans fought to help make that decision. After the war, the federal government created a permanent, segregated part of the United States Army for African Americans with the formation of regiments that came to be known as the "Buffalo Soldiers." No matter where they went, prejudice was their constant foe. They served in the West, helping to dislodge Native American populations to make room for the expanding United States settlement. This expansionist spirit would reach the Caribbean before the century ended. Unlike the Civil War where black participation kicked in heavily at the end of the war, African American regiments were among the first troops sent to Cuba in 1898 to fight in the Spanish-American War.

Early Call to Service

During the American Revolution and the War of 1812, people of African descent, both slave and free, often fought side by side with their white counterparts. During peacetime blacks were discouraged from serving in state and local militias, but they continued to serve in the navy. As white settlers moved into Kentucky, African American slaves struggled for survival in equal measure. Monk Estill, a slave of James Estill, fought in the Battle of Little Mountain in 1782 in present-day Montgomery County.

Later, African Americans took up arms only when slaves led revolts, such as Nat Turner's rebellion in 1831. These uprisings led to a United States that did not desire to see African Americans, slave or free, in uniform or holding a weapon.

Washington Crossing the Delaware (Prince Whipple)
Photograph of the painting by E. Leitze
Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Battle of Lake Erie (Cyrus Tiffany)
Photograph of the painting by William Henry Powell
Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Illustration of Nat Turner's Rebellion
Courtesy of the Library of Congress

York in the Village of the Mandan
Photograph of the painting by C. M. Russell
Courtesy of the Montana Historical Society

Civil War (1861–1865)

From Slavery to Freedom

When the southern states left the Union in 1860, they claimed their intent was to preserve the "southern way of life." This included the institution of slavery. President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, which freed slaves in the states of the Confederacy. The proclamation did not apply to slaveholding states like Kentucky that had stayed loyal to the Union. For slaves in Kentucky, where southern sympathies ran deep, freedom still meant hoping they could earn money on the side to buy their own freedom, waiting for their owners to free them, or escaping. In 1863, the authorization was given to the Union army to recruit Federal units of African American soldiers, but in Kentucky heavy recruitment did not start until 1864. Enlistment for slaves meant freedom, so African Americans left farms and fields by the thousands—often with their families—and joined the war effort. In Kentucky, the destination for many of them was Camp Nelson in Jessamine County.

Storming Fort Wagner, 1890
Lithograph by Kurz and Allison
Donated by Dr. Hambleton Tapp

"The True Defenders of the Constitution"
Loaned by the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center

"The Negro in the War—Various Employment of the Colored Men in the Federal Army,"
From *The Soldier in Our Civil War*
Loaned by the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center

Andrew Jackson Smith (1842-1912)
Courtesy of Congressional Medal of Honor Society

Medal of Honor
Loaned by Andrew Bowman

The Fifty-fifth Massachusetts Volunteers Marching into Charleston, South Carolina
Andrew Jackson Smith joined the Fifty-fifth after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued in 1863.
Courtesy of the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center

Camp Nelson

Camp Nelson was the third-largest recruitment and training center for African Americans in the country during the Civil War. These new units were designated United States Colored Troops (U.S.C.T.). Eight regiments, including infantry, cavalry, and heavy artillery were mustered at Camp Nelson, and other U.S.C.T. regiments were stationed there. Fifteen more U.S.C.T. regiments were also formed in several locations across Kentucky. These Kentucky units garrisoned posts around the state, but they also fought in several engagements outside of Kentucky. Approximately 24,000 African Americans from Kentucky served in the Union army, a total that was second in number only to Louisiana.

Reconstructed Earthworks Fort Wall

Blueprint of Earthworks at Camp Nelson
Courtesy of the Jessamine County Fiscal Court-Camp Nelson Heritage Park

Map of Camp Nelson during the Civil War
Courtesy of the Jessamine County Fiscal Court-Camp Nelson Heritage Park

Camp Nelson Facilities, c. 1864

Backpack, 116th United States Colored Infantry
Loaned by Gary and Wanda Brown

Civil War Archeological Excavations at Camp Nelson
Loaned by the Jessamine County Fiscal Court-Camp Nelson Heritage Park

Canteen stopper

Burnside cartridge

Belt buckle

Shoe-heel plate

Marbles

Whiteware plate

Pocketknife

Knife

Suspender clips

Shirt buttons

Spoons

Whiskey flask

Three-ring minié balls

Stoneware crock

Straight-edge shaving razor **Buttons**

Eagle buttons **Coins**

Eagle flask **Aqua glass bottlenecks**

Brown glass shards **Metal fragment**

Pencil ferrule **Woman's metal buckle**

Black glass bead **Whitewar sherds**

Ironstone Sherds **Glass tumbler**

Whiteware tea cup

Fort Pillow
Lithograph by Kurz and Allison
Donated by Dr. Hambleton Tapp

The Price of Freedom
Over 200,000 African Americans served in the navy and artillery, infantry, and cavalry branches of the Union army, and approximately 70,000 gave their lives for the cause.

Reproduction **Civil War Naval Uniform**

Reproduction **Civil War Army Uniform**

***The Spirit of Freedom*, 1998**
Sculpture by Ed Hamilton
Donated by the Office of the Governor

African American Sailors in the Union Navy from Kentucky
Courtesy of Howard University Black Sailors Research Project

Western Frontier (1866–1890)

The Buffalo Soldiers

Newly freed from the bondage of slavery, African Americans looked for opportunities to take their place in American society. In 1866, Congress authorized the formation of the segregated Ninth and Tenth Cavalry Regiments and four infantry units that eventually combined into the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry Regiments. Areas of recruitment included Louisiana and Kentucky. Many Kentucky veterans whose units had been mustered out at the end of the Civil War joined the new regiments. However, racism still reigned. These units often received the worst horses and were assigned to the most decrepit and desolate outposts. Out West, African American troops often had to defend themselves against hostile settlers they were sent to protect. The practice of having white commissioned officers was still in effect, but very few white officers wanted

to command black troops, and those that did often had no desire to see the African American troops do well. Their Indian foes, however, compared black soldiers to one of their most revered symbols, and named them the "Buffalo Soldiers."

Buffalo Soldier Gloves and Coat
Gloves loaned by Gary and Wanda Brown
Coat loaned by the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center

A portion of the barracks and a company of the Twenty-fifth U.S. Infantry Regiment at Fort Shaw in Helena, Montana, 1890
Courtesy of the Montana Historical Society

Interior of enlisted men's barracks, Fort Shaw, Helena, Montana, 1888
Courtesy of the Montana Historical Society

Tenth Cavalry escort for General Merritt, St. Mary, Montana, 1894
Courtesy of the Montana Historical Society

"A" Troop, Tenth U.S. Cavalry with drawn sabers at Fort Keogh, Montana, 1892
Courtesy of the Montana Historical Society

The U.S. Army experiment with bicycles, c. 1896
Courtesy of the Montana Historical Society

The Buffalo Soldier Monument
Sculpture by Eddie Dixon
Loaned by the Coca-Cola Company

McClellan Saddle, 1885 Model
Loaned by the International Museum of the Horse, Kentucky Horse Park

Reproduction **1880s Cavalry Uniforms**

United States Army Escort Wagon, c. 1895
Donated by Kenneth Cummins

Thomas Shaw (1846-95)
Courtesy of the United States Military Academy

Brent Woods (1850-1906)
Courtesy of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society

Charles Young (1864-1922)
Courtesy of the United States Military Academy

Reproduction **1880s Cavalry Uniform**

Loaned by the International Museum of the Horse, the Kentucky Horse Park

Trapdoor Springfield Carbine
Loaned by the International Museum of the Horse, the Kentucky Horse Park

Reproduction **Tenth Cavalry Guidons**
Loaned by the International Museum of the Horse, the Kentucky Horse Park

Reproduction **of Ninth Cavalry Regiment Symbol**
Motto: *"We can, We will."*

Reproduction **of Tenth Cavalry Regiment Symbol**
Motto: *"Ready and Forward*."

The Spanish-American War (1898)

First in the Fight

When the battleship USS *Maine* mysteriously blew up in Havana harbor, Cuba, on February 15, 1898, twenty-two African American sailors were among the 260 dead. The Ninth and Tenth Cavalry Regiments and the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry Regiments were among the first troops sent to Cuba to fight in this brief war. Black soldiers fought alongside Teddy Roosevelt and his unit of Rough Riders at the battle of San Juan Hill and other engagements.. Roosevelt praised the performance of the black soldiers after the battle but changed his stance shortly after that to focus attention on his Rough Riders. African American troops found themselves fighting in the Philippines over the next few years to secure possessions for the United States.

The Cooper Brothers
Allen Cooper (1879-1912) and Pleas Cooper (1881-1939) were from Clark County, Kentucky. Both served in the Philippines, and Pleas lied about his age so he could join the army with his brother.
Courtesy of Amanda Cooper Elliot and James Elliot

African American soldiers of the Twenty-fourth Infantry marching into camp in Cuba
Courtesy of the National Archives

African American soldiers guarding prisoners in Cuba
Courtesy of the National Archives

The Battle of Las Quasimas near Santiago, June 24, 1898
Lithograph by Kurz and Allison
Courtesy of the Library of Congress

"The Conquerors"
By Paul Laurence Dunbar
Loaned by the International Museum of the Horse, the Kentucky Horse Park

1906–1949

Troubles At Home and Abroad

Despite continued and persistent discrimination and prejudice, African Americans served in ever-greater numbers during the wars of the first half of the twentieth century. In the early part of the twentieth century, African American soldiers experienced two tragic incidents, in Brownsville and Houston, Texas, both of which involved clashes between black troops and white residents who hated and feared the thought of black men in uniform. A. Phillip Randolph, leader of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, threatened to lead marches on Washington in the 1940s if conditions did not improve for African Americans civilians and soldiers. The army's policy towards its black units often made little sense. For example, the four original Buffalo Soldier regiments did not go to Europe in World War I.

Barriers within the segregated military began to fall during World War II. Many new areas of service opened for African American men and women. But incidents where African Americans soldiers were seated above or behind German prisoners of war in theatres were a grim reminder of the strength of racism and prejudice. The Korean War would be the last conflict in which racially segregated units served under the American flag.

World War I (1914–1918)

The Fight for Democracy Only Applies to Europe

When America entered the trenches of World War I in 1917, Jim Crow was firmly entrenched in the United States. The lynching of African Americans continued to be an all-too-familiar sight. African Americans hoped again that serving their country in the war effort would help them at home.

After facing prejudice and violence during basic training, most of those who were sent to Europe were relegated to support roles. This normally meant digging trenches and moving supplies. Some units, such as the 369th Infantry Regiment, did go into combat. The regiment was attached to the French and fought side by side with them, spending more time on the front lines than any other American unit. Both the 369th and many individuals in it won high French military honors but not a single American decoration at the time. By the end of the war over 368,000 African Americans had served in the military, 12,000 of whom were Kentuckians. They returned home having experienced much better treatment by the French and wanting the same in the United States.

Keep Them in their Place

General John J. Pershing was the commander of the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe during World War I. As African American troops arrived in France, Pershing's headquarters sent a secret directive in 1918 to the French Military stating that the French must treat the black soldiers the way white Americans treat them, "as inferior beings." The French burned the directive, and it was in France that many African Americans soldiers got, for the first time, a taste of what it was like to be treated as an equal by whites.

369th Infantry Distinctive Unit Insignia

The Harlem Hell Fighters
Donated by the Department of Military Affairs, Military Records and Research Branch

John Ray Carter
Courtesy of John Trowbridge

Reproduction **World War I Uniform**

Regimental flag, 801st Pioneer Infantry Regiment

Company H, 801st Pioneer Infantry Regiment
Courtesy of Blake Settle

Ninety-second Division M1917 Uniforms Tunic with Buffalo Patch
Loaned by Gary and Wanda Brown

Irvin O'Bannon (1895-1969)
Courtesy Juanita and Dennis White

M1917 Army Tunic, c. 1918
Loaned by Juanita and Dennis White

Leonard Yates, from Madison County, Kentucky, served with Company H, 801st Pioneer Infantry
Courtesy of the Yates family

World War I Identification tags
Loaned by the Yates family

Enoch Robinson Cooper
Courtesy of Amanda Cooper Elliot and James Elliot

Edward Norton Hamilton (1891-1960) served overseas with Company C of the 532nd Engineers from August 1918 through July 1919. After his service, Hamilton worked at several businesses and in the late 1930s owned a shop on the corner of Sixth and Walnut in Louisville. He is the father of noted Louisville sculptor Ed Hamilton, who created the *Spirit of Freedom* monument to African American Civil War soldiers in Washington, D.C.
Courtesy of Ed Hamilton

Private Robert Garner
Courtesy of Mattie Davis

Private Charles Smoot Sr.
Courtesy of Karen Cotton McDaniel

Carlton Ellis
Courtesy of Barbara F. White

The Sable Doughboy
African Americans participated in World War I mainly as a labor and support force. Many of them spent their time in Europe on the docks unloading supplies, repairing roads and farmland, or in numerous other support roles. However, there were also two African American combat divisions of infantry, the Ninety-second with the American Expeditionary Force, and the Ninety-third, which served with the French army, as well as several smaller combat units.

"Negro Pastor with YMCA . . . "
Louisville Courier-Journal, February 26, 1919
Courtesy of the Department of Military Affairs, Military Records and Research Branch

"Negro Troops In The War"
Courtesy of the Department of Military Affairs, Military Records and Research Branch

"Negroes Home From France"
Louisville Times, December 18, 1918
Courtesy of the Department of Military Affairs, Military Records and Research Branch

"American Negro Is Curiosity In Germany"
Courtesy of the Department of Military Affairs, Military Records and Research Branch

"Colored Veterans Organized Chapter"
Louisville Herald, February 7, 1921
Courtesy of the Department of Military Affairs, Military Records and Research Branch

369th Infantry Regimental Band Recordings
Courtesy of Inside Sounds, Memphis, Tennessee

"There's A Service Flag in the Window"
Sheet music and lyrics by Colonel Charles Young, 1918
Loaned by the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center

World War I U.S. Army Gas Mask, c. 1917

Gas Mask Patent drawing, 1914

World War II (1939–1945)

A First Time for Everything

In 1940, racist viewpoints in the American military still held that African

Americans did not make good soldiers. At the start of U.S. involvement in World War II, the War Department reiterated the need to keep black and white soldiers separate. African Americans could serve their country, but they would do it separately and under white leadership. Agitation by the African American community, however, and the needs of war led to gradual advances. Of the nearly one million African American men and women who served during World War II, more than 20,000 were Kentuckians. In spite of stiff resistance, there were many firsts for African Americans in the military: the first pilots, naval officers, navy WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service), WAACs (Women's Auxiliary Army Corps), marines, and paratroopers.

Anna M. Clarke (1919-44)
Courtesy of Franklin James

Reproduction **Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) Uniform**

Marie L. Johnson was born in 1916 in Cynthiana but moved to Midway as a teenager. When the decision was made to allow women in the service, she joined the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, traveling to Des Moines, Iowa, for training. She served for a year and a half. After her discharge, Marie moved to Milwaukee to work in a factory producing batteries for the military.
Courtesy of Marie L. Johnson

Letter to Marie L. Johnson
Courtesy of Marie L. Johnson

Tuskegee
Prior to WWII, blacks were not allowed to fly for the U.S. military. In 1941, civil rights activists and the African American press exerted pressure that resulted in the creation of an all-black pursuit squadron, the Ninety-ninth, headquartered in Tuskegee, Alabama. The Ninety-ninth later became part of the all-black 332nd Fighter Group. These black units would go on to have a distinguished combat record and could boast that they never lost to enemy planes a bomber they were escorting. The Tuskegee program produced operational units in which all pilots, navigators, bombardiers, maintenance and support staff, instructors, and all the personnel who kept the planes in the air were African American.

Frank Weaver
Courtesy of Frank Weaver

Reproduction **Tuskegee Airmen Mechanics Uniform**

385th Base Unit, Tuskegee Army Airfield, Tuskegee, 1945
Courtesy of Frank Weaver

Frank Weaver and Virgil Jewel at Tuskegee Army Airfield, Tuskegee, 1945
Courtesy of Frank Weaver

Tuskegee Air Field B-25 Mitchell Bombers, 1945
Courtesy of Frank Weaver

Hanger Chief, 1945
Courtesy of Frank Weaver

Roy M. Chappell and his navigation school graduating class in Hondo, Texas, 1944
Courtesy of Dr. Lucy Chappell

Roy M. Chappell, 1945
Courtesy of Dr. Lucy Chappell

1/48 scale model airplanes

T-6D Texan, the "Pilot Maker," a Trainer

PT-17 Cadet, a Training Aircraft

P-39D Airacobra, a single-seat fighter/bomber available in large numbers at the beginning of the war

P-40L Warhawk, a single-seat fighter that became an early workhorse of the Allied air effort

P-51 Mustang, a single-seat fighter acknowledged as the best fighter of the war

B-25J Mitchell, a medium-range, twin-engine attack bomber
Models Courtesy of the Military Model Club of Louisville

Julius Calloway in Primary Flight School, 1944
Courtesy of Julius W. Calloway

1944 single-engine graduating class at Tuskegee Army Airfield
Courtesy of Julius W. Calloway

Julius Calloway and a P-40 "Warhawk" at Tuskegee Army Airfield, 1944
Courtesy of Julius W. Calloway

Julius Calloway in French Morocco standing next to a F-86 Saber jet, 1955
Courtesy of Julius W. Calloway

Retirement ceremony at Nellis Air Force Base, 1970
Courtesy of Julius W. Calloway

***Louisville Defender,* May 6, 1944**
Courtesy of Kentucky State University, the Center of Excellence for the Study of Kentucky African Americans

***Kentucky Thorobred,* October 1943**
Courtesy of Kentucky State University, the Center of Excellence for the Study of Kentucky African Americans

Benjamin O. Davis Jr. at Godmam Airfield, Fort Knox
Courtesy of the Patton Museum

Alvin Larue at Tuskegee, 1944
Courtesy of Alvin Larue

Alvin Larue in Chicago at a nightclub, 1946
Courtesy of Alvin Larue

Latimore Cole
Courtesy of Latimore Cole

U.S. Army Air Force 1942 Pattern Service Coat
Loaned by Latimore Cole

George Cowherd was born in Illinois in 1922. His family moved to Green County, Kentucky, in 1927. Drafted into the Army Air Force in 1943, he trained in Greenwood, Mississippi. Cowherd was part of a service unit and spent most of his enlistment at the Greenwood Army Air Base. He remembers numerous instances of being in danger from the local white citizens when he went off base.
Courtesy of George Cowherd

U.S. Army Air Force 1942 Pattern Service Coat, and 1937 Pattern Trousers
Loaned by George Cowherd

John Barbour
Courtesy of John Barbour

U.S. Army Air Force E.T.O. Jacket and Trousers, c. 1945
Donated by John Barbour

Sergeant John Barbour back from Germany, 1945
He worked for a time after the war in Chicago as a truck driver.
Courtesy of John Barbour

Black Tankers at Fort Knox

Most of the first African American tank crewmen were trained at Fort Knox during World War II. They went on to serve in the 761st, 758th, and 784th Tank battalions in Europe. Many Kentuckians, like Ron Lane from Scottsville,

Kentucky, were among them. These images depict life for African Americans at Fort Knox and some that went on to Europe during World War II.

Opening of Service Club # 3, 1942
Courtesy of the Patton Museum

Farewell Party for 758th Tank Battalion
Courtesy of the Patton Museum

Service Club Dance
Courtesy of the University of Louisville Photo Archives

Classroom Instruction
Courtesy of the Patton Museum

Sprinter Jesse Owens Visiting Fort Knox
Courtesy of the Patton Museum

Raising of the Flag at Fort Knox
Courtesy of the University of Louisville Photo Archives

761st Tank Battalion in Germany, 1945
Courtesy of the Patton Museum

U.S. Marine Corps Dress Blue Jacket
Loaned by the Brooks-Hummons Genealogical Research Project

U.S. Marine Corps Dress Blue Uniform, c. 1943
Donated by Ed Polin Jr.

Margaret Patterson Jones, 1938
Courtesy of Sylvia J. Ayers

The Red Ball Express
Courtesy United States Army Transportation Museum

Oscar Dishman Jr.
Courtesy of Marilyn Dishman

Reproduction **Paratrooper Outfit**

Integration

In 1948, President Truman issued Executive Order 9981 that called for equality of treatment and opportunity in the military. The order did not specifically call for the end of segregation, but it signaled the final countdown. The military adopted this process with great reservation. When the Korean War started in 1950, there were still segregated units fighting on the frozen hillsides. One of them was the last of the Buffalo Soldier units formed in 1866, the Twenty-fourth Infantry Regiment.

1950-2000

Equal Opportunity in an Integrated Military

The newly integrated American military would endure growing pains to become what it is today. Studies done after World War II showed that a segregated military was not efficient. Also, the "equal" in "separate but equal" facilities was more fiction than fact. Integration in the military was a significant advance for African Americans, and it helped set the tone for changes in the rest of American society. African American veterans found their communities embroiled in a civil rights movement that was often as violent and deadly as the battlefield. Changes in American law and society and reorganization after Vietnam shaped the modern American military force, which faced its first major test in Desert Storm, as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, an African American son of Jamaican immigrants, led the way.

Korea War (1950–1953)

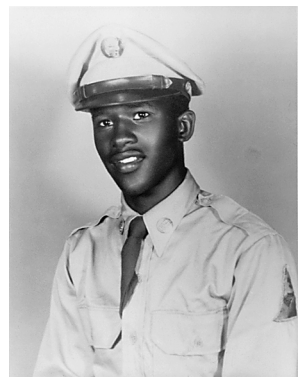
The Military Segregation Train Grinds to a Halt

The Korean War was the last stop for an officially segregated United States military. Policies first adopted in the Civil War came to an end. African Americans would now eat, sleep, work, and fight together with white American soldiers. On the issue of segregation, the American military was forging slightly ahead of American society, which still allowed legal separation by race. American society would need another legal boost in the form of the landmark *Brown* v. *Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* Supreme Court decision in 1954.

In the summer of 1955, a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, brought the African American civil rights struggle to the forefront of America's and the world's attention. Veterans played important roles in the movement.

Harold Woodman
Courtesy of Harold Woodman

Army Dress Blue Uniform, c. 1965
Donated by Harold Woodman



Bobby Turner of Louisville, Kentucky, was born on April 23, 1933, in Savannah, Georgia. He joined the military in 1950 and went to Fort Knox for basic and tanker training. During his last week of training, Turner volunteered for airborne training. "The first time I jumped out of a plane, that was my first time ever flying in a plane. . . . I was so amazed that never having flown in a plane before I was seeing the earth from a different view." He made over twenty jumps during his military service. Turner left the service in 1953. He eventually attended Tuskegee University

where he met his wife, who was from Louisville.
Courtesy of Bobby Turner

188th Airborne Infantry Regiment, Fort Campbell, Kentucky, 1951
Courtesy of Bobby Turner

Thomas Smithers
Courtesy of Thomas Smithers

Charles McCutchen in Seoul, Korea, 1952
Courtesy of Charles McCutchen

Donald M. Smith
Courtesy of Theodore Harris

Vietnam War (1965–1973)

Say It Loud I'm Black and I'm Proud

Vietnam was a long and eventually unpopular war. African American soldiers, both draftees and volunteers, were part of a struggle on two fronts, their own civil rights movement at home and the battle to stop the spread of communism in Vietnam. Black soldiers in Vietnam and at U.S. bases around the world fought to survive and maintain their cultural identity while serving their country. One way the military addressed this was by allowing African American soldiers to wear Afro hairstyles.

In 1965, African Americans accounted for nearly 25 percent of U.S. fatalities in Vietnam. This percentage dropped to 12 percent towards the end of the war, but there were numerous other problems, many race related, that arose during the Vietnam War.

{*Image of black soldiers with raised fist in Germany}*
From *Blacks in America's Wars* by Robert Mullin

Rob Jordan in Vietnam
Courtesy of Rob Jordan

Black Protest in Germany, 1970

Samuel G. Hurry in Vietnam, 1967
Courtesy of Theodore Harris

Bronze Star Certificate
Courtesy of Theodore Harris

Ishmon Burks eating dinner with ARVN officers and their families in Hue, Vietnam, 1968
Courtesy of Ishmon Burks

Ishmon Burks being promoted to Captain in Vietnam, 1969
Courtesy of Ishmon Burks

U.S. Army Mess Dress Uniform worn by Colonel Ishmon Burks, c. 1988
Loaned by Ishmon Burks

M1902 Pattern Dress Saber of Colonel Ishmon Burks
Loaned by Ishmon Burks

U.S. Navy Winter Dress Blue Wool Jumper and Bell Bottom Trousers
Loaned by Theodore Harris

Charlotte Turley
Courtesy of Charlotte Turley

Doug Smith in Diego Garcia, 1971
Courtesy of Doug Smith

U.S. Navy Dungaree Work Uniform with Work Jacket
Loaned by Doug Smith

Gary Brown on the USS *Valcour*, 1968
Courtesy of Gary and Wanda Brown

U.S. Navy Dress Blue Uniform, c. 1968
Loaned by Gary and Wanda Brown

Dennis White
Courtesy of Dennis and Juanita White

U.S. Air Force Dress Uniform and Overcoat, c. 1966
Loaned by Dennis and Juanita White

Robert L. Davis
Courtesy of Robert L. Davis

Medical Field Service School Diploma
Courtesy Robert L. Davis

Mary Frances Clarke was born in Shelbyville, Kentucky, in 1938, but grew up in Louisville. She joined the air force in 1965 and received a commission as a lieutenant because of her professional training and experience as a dietician. Black female officers were rare, and she remembers incidents of strong resentment related to her rank, skin color, and gender.
Courtesy Mary Frances Clarke

U.S. Air Force Summer Utilities, c. 1965
Donated by Mary Frances Clarke

U.S. Coast Guard Uniform of Donald L. Watson, 1970
Loaned by Dennis and Juanita White

William T. Gates
Courtesy of William and Antonia Gates

Carl Brashear Training and Diving, 1967
Courtesy of Carl Brashear

Carl Brashear, 1974
Courtesy of Carl Brashear

Mark V Diving Suit, 1944
The MKV diving suit comes in sizes 1, 2, and 3. This suit is a size three and was for divers over six feet tall. The Mark V diving helmet was introduced in 1917 and remained the standard deep-water salvage equipment until 1980. This particular suit was made by the Diving Equipment and Salvage Co., Inc., in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
Loaned by the United State Naval Sea Systems Command

John W. Shannon
Courtesy of John W. Shannon

Michael Crutcher during basic training, 1971
Courtesy of Michael Crutcher

U.S. Army Class A Uniform
Loaned by Michael Crutcher

Recruiting Poster, *"Serve With Pride Navy,"* c. 1975
Donated by the Kentucky Department of Military Affairs

The Modern Military (1980–1989)

It's A Great Place to Start

Recruiting Poster, *"Today's Army Proud & Ready,"* 1985
Donated by the Kentucky Department of Military Affairs

Kittie Thomas
Courtesy of Kittie Thomas

U.S. Coast Guard Duty Uniform - Slacks, Blouse, and Tie
Loaned by Kittie Thomas

Patrick Turpin
Courtesy of Patrick Turpin

U.S. Navy Khaki Trousers, Blouse, and Garrison Cap
Loaned by Patrick Turpin

U.S. Marine Corps Camouflage Utilities
Loaned by James Johnson

James L. Johnson
Courtesy of James Johnson

U.S. Army Woodland Camouflage Pattern Chemical Suit
Donated by Stephen Smithers

Stephen Smithers
Donated by Stephen Smithers

Antonia Gates in Saudi Arabia, 1998
Antonia A. Gates was born in 1956 in Nicholasville, Kentucky. She graduated from nursing school at the University of Kentucky and joined the Army Reserve in 1983 as a second lieutenant. She moved to Georgia in 1986. While there, as the only black and only female officer in a field artillery battalion, she often encountered hostility. Her unit was called to active duty in 1990 during the Gulf War and replaced active-duty soldiers stationed in the Middle East.
Courtesy of Antonia Gates

U.S. Air Force Flight Nurse Desert Camouflage Flight Suit with "Boonie" Cap
Loaned by William and Antonia Gates

U.S. Army Woodland Pattern Camouflage Winter Parka, c. 1985
Loaned by Mike Bannister

Persian Gulf War (1990–1991)

Linda Godfrey and her Kentucky National Guard Unit in Saudi Arabia, 1991
Courtesy of Linda Godfrey

U.S. Army Class A Green Uniform Jacket, Blouse, and Skirt
Loaned by Linda Godfrey

Eric Coulter
Courtesy of Eric Coulter

U.S. Air Force Olive Drab Flight Suit, c. 1990
Loaned by Eric Coulter

U.S. Army "Chocolate Chip" Pattern Camouflage Battle Dress Uniform Jacket and Trousers, with Jungle Combat Boots, c. 1990
Loaned by Azelia Browning

Leta Odom Refueling Aircraft during the Persian Gulf War, 1991
Odom was born in 1967 in Frankfort, Kentucky. She joined the army in 1989. By December 1990 she was headed to Saudi Arabia as part of an aviation support battalion in Operation Desert Storm. Chemical scares forced her and her comrades to wear chemical suits for hours at a time. In 1996 she joined the Kentucky army National Guard and is currently on active duty.
Courtesy of Leta Odom

U.S. Army Class A Uniform
Loaned by Leta Odom

Notes

Notes

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